

New theater in town

By Debra Filcman
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When Brian Fahey and Michelle Kordis returned to their childhood homes in Duxbury after college, they quickly realized something was missing: a local theater company.

The two industrious young thespians made it incumbent upon themselves to change that. And they moved swiftly. The brainstorming began in March and their company, Gurnet Theater Project, will produce its first play beginning July 21.

Their to-do list over the past four months has been lengthy. A bank account, post office box, and the appropriate insurance and permits for the first performance needed to be secured.

"We did a lot of that stuff in one day," Fahey said. "And then Michelle and I looked at each other and said, 'Did we just open a theater company?'"

The pair also needed permission from the town and state to use their preferred stage — the land surrounding the Myles Standish monument, and had to pay for the rights to their chosen play — Tony Kushner's adaptation of Corneille's "The Illusion."

"Everyone was really great about it from the get-go," Fahey said. "We were able to get the key to the gate at the monument for rehearsals, which is nice."

The area, Fahey said, has a stone patio that forms a natural stage, and the outdoor environment gives them a chance to perform for as large a group as they can muster.



Staff photo/Debra Filcman

In character — Kristen Schnibbe's and Alex Lewis's costumes lend a bit of realism to their late night rehearsals for *The Illusion*.

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Their inaugural production, outdoors and free to the public, would not pay for itself. So they outlined their ideas and plans in a mission statement that they took to friends, family and local businesses, asking for their support.

"I was reading the paper one day while I was at work at Razia's (Tailor and Dry Cleaners), and I saw an ad about this theater group," Kate Anthony said.

Anthony had come home from school this summer, only to realize that all the local productions were already cast. Excited to see another opportunity to participate, she quickly e-mailed Fahey and Kordis to offer her assistance.

"Half an hour later, they came into the store asking for money," Anthony said.

"We were selling ad space in the program," Fahey interjected. "You make it sound so awful!"

"Well, you still needed money," Anthony replied.

Anthony was a welcome addition to the Gurnet Theater Project, par-

ticularly because of the subject matter of their first play. "The Illusion" takes place in 17th century France and, conveniently, Anthony is a French history minor.

She came on board as their dramaturg. Her job is to provide background information on the time and place, help actors with pronunciations and styles, and help them understand the general vision of the piece.

"The Illusion," she said, is about a man who seeks the help of a magician to find the son he abandoned long ago.

Fahey, who directs the production, said although it's their first production, it was easy to cast. Many of the cast and crew learned about the company through word of mouth. Fahey and Kordis had either performed with or directed several members, or had seen them perform at the high school.

The approximately 20 participants range in age from 15 to 23 and include some sets of siblings. By day they attend classes, wait tables and ring up customers.

"We were lucky enough to know a lot of local kids who were very good and we knew would be committed," Fahey said. "But for our next production, we'll probably have open auditions."

They've gathered a wealth of local talent. In addition to their actors and techies, they recruited Lilian Webster to create the posters displayed around town, and Carolyn Whipple will play the oboe during the performance.

Talk is already in the works for the next production, which will likely take place in November. Technical director Liam Billingham is set to direct it and while nothing is set in stone, residents may have

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"Waiting for Godot" to look forward to.

Gurnet has also raised enough money to fund "The Illusion" and a good portion of their fall production, although they don't have any expectations of the company as a moneymaker.

"I don't think money has ever really been one of our goals," Fahey said. "If it company ultimately becomes self-sustaining, that would be great, but I don't think anyone has thought of paying themselves to do this. We just wanted the experience, and it's been a great one."

Performances at the Myles Standish Monument will run Thursday, July 21, through Sunday, July 24, at 6 p.m. Gurnet invites attendees to take a chair or blanket for seating. Admission is free.

In case of rain, call Gurnet at (617) 771-7032 to learn if the performance has been postponed.



Staff photo/Debra Filcman

Flashback — Dan Frongillo, playing the father, Pridamant, watches scenes from his son's life unfold before his eyes while he waits with the magician and her servant, Jessica Bartlett and Kayleigh MacFarlane.